Complaints Policy (non-staff)

Policy reviewed by:	**Full Governing Body**
Meeting:	**Spring**
Review frequency:	**Annually**
Approved:	**March 2026**
Next review:	**March 2027**

All schools are legally required to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints relating to the school. The Governing Body of our school has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have concerns or wish to make a complaint and how your complaint will be dealt with.

Our school follows current advice and guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding school complaints procedures, including on dealing with serial and persistent complaints. Our school intends for all concerns or complaints to be dealt with fairly, openly and promptly.

This procedure applies to all concerns or complaints, **except** for those which relate to:

- Pupil admissions and exclusions,
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN),
- Child protection and safeguarding procedures,
- Staff conduct, grievances, capability or disciplinary procedures,
- Services provided from the school's premises by other organisations,
- School re-organisation proposals,
- National Curriculum content,
- Whistleblowing or
- Subject Access Requests (SAR) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

The difference between a concern and a complaint:

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure. Selly Oak Trust School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Rachel Stopher-Murray, Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Rachel Stopher-Murray, Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

Anonymous complaints:

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Resolving *concerns* informally:

It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved informally at the earliest possible stage, before they become formal complaints which need to invoke formal procedures. We encourage parents/carers with a concern to raise it informally with a member of staff. This may include your child's Form Teacher, Teacher, Engagement Lead or Head of School for Class Based, Rotation or 6th Form.

If your concern is not resolved then please contact the Headteacher's PA, Mrs Lalean Pryce, on the school phone number (0121-472-0876) or by email at Lalean.pryce@sellyoak.bham.sch.uk, to arrange a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher) to discuss your concern.

The Headteacher will be advised of all meeting requests. The Headteacher will ensure that you are directed to the most appropriate member of the team to meet with in order to resolve your concern.

During your meeting with the member of the Senior Leadership Team it is hoped that a way forward will be agreed which resolves your concerns.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Selly Oak Trust School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

Stage 1 - Escalating a Concern to a Complaint:

If your concern is not resolved at your meeting, then it will be **escalated to a complaint**. You then need to complete the form **Appendix B.** The completed form should be returned to school in a sealed envelope marked for the attention of the Headteacher as detailed below.

CONFIDENTIAL
FAO Headteacher
Selly Oak Trust School
Oak Tree Lane
Selly Oak
Birmingham
B29 6HZ

This will then be given to the Headteacher without being opened. A complaint can also be raised via another method, i.e. verbally (telephone) or in person, please contact the school office. Complaints may also be submitted by a third party acting on your behalf, as long as you have shared with us your consent for them to do so.

The Headteacher will then acknowledge your complaint in writing, review and investigate the issues you raise, and then arrange a meeting with you in school or over the phone. Please note that, in line with school procedures, the Headteacher will inform the Chair of Governors that a complaint has been raised and will give a brief outline of your issues.

Timescales:

If your complaint is about or involving our:

- **Staff** (other than the Headteacher), please address it in the first instance to the **Headteacher**.
- **Headteacher**, please address it to our **Chair of Governors**.
- **Chair of Governors**, any individual governor or the whole governing body, please address it to the **Clerk to the Governing Body**.

We will endeavour to abide by timescales stated under each stage of the process (as shown in the attached flow chart). Sometimes, due to the nature or complexity of the concern raised, we may need to set different timescales in which case you will be notified of the date by which we will respond, and you will be kept informed of progress throughout. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Our school will not investigate complaints that have been made more than 3 months after the event that led to the complaint, apart from in exceptional circumstances. It is for us to determine if such circumstances are exceptional and if it is therefore appropriate for the complaint to be investigated.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of your complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or could result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If you start legal action against our school in relation to your complaint, we will consider whether to suspend our procedure regarding this complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 5 school days (i.e. excluding weekends, bank holidays or school holidays) of receiving it and confirm the name of the person who will investigate it. As part of their investigation, this person will:

- Seek to clarify the nature of your complaint.
- Establish what remains unresolved and what outcome you would like to see; and
- Consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

You will receive either a **notification of the outcome** or an **update** on our investigation, in writing or via telephone **within 15 school days** of us acknowledging receipt of your complaint form. The notification will explain the reason(s) behind our decision and whether it was partially upheld, upheld or not upheld, and how you can request a review by appealing the outcome – Stage 2.

In addition, our school may offer you one or more of the following:

- A **factual explanation** surrounding your complaint/concern.
- An **apology**.
- An **admission** that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An **assurance** that we will try to help ensure that what you complained about will not happen again, and/or an **explanation** of the steps that have been or will be taken in this respect, indicating the timescale within which any changes will be made.
- An **undertaking** to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Observing confidentiality:

Where possible complaints will be dealt with confidentially and, where the Governing Body is involved, we will avoid sharing details of your complaint with the whole Governing Body except in very general terms. We would also ask **you** to observe confidentiality and not discuss complaints publicly or via social media.
Our school maintains a centrally held record of all formal complaints received, including any actions taken and outcome, and any documentation referred to as part of the complaints process. You have a right to request copies in accordance with our policy of dealing with Subject Access Requests (SAR) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

The governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedures to ensure that all complaints received are managed appropriately.

Safeguarding:

Wherever a complaint suggests that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, our school has a duty to report this immediately in accordance with Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy a copy of which is available on our website.

Stage 2 - Appealing the outcome of Stage 1 of your complaint:

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you can **request for the outcome to be reviewed** by the complaints panel of our governing board. To do that, please complete the review form at **Appendix C** and submit it to the Clerk to the Governing Board via our school office, marked as **Private and Confidential,** within ***20 school days*** of the date when you received the Stage 1 decision letter. If you would like to request a review via another method, i.e. verbally or in person, please contact the school office.

The **review panel** will be formed of at least three impartial governors with no prior involvement with or knowledge of your complaint. If your complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the majority of or the whole governing board, the panel will consist of external independent governors. The Clerk will acknowledge your review request in writing within ***5 school days*** of receiving it. We aim to convene the **review panel meeting** within ***20 school days*** of receiving your request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep you informed.

At least ***10 school days*** before the review meeting date, the Clerk will contact you to:

- **Confirm the date**, time and venue of the meeting ensuring that, if you are invited, the date is convenient to all the parties and the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- **Request copies** of any further written material (if required), which needs to be submitted to the review panel no later than ***5 school days*** before the date of the meeting.

If you **reject the offer** of three proposed dates to meet without good reason, the panel reserves the right to convene the review meeting, which will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The panel will decide who they need to **invite to the meeting**, in order to enable them to review the outcome of your complaint effectively. Those invited may include:

- You, the complainant.

- The person who investigated your complaint at Stage 1 above; and
- Any other relevant parties identified by the panel e.g. witnesses.

You are entitled to **bring a friend or colleague** to the review meeting. You should notify the panel if you intend to bring someone along and if you intend them to speak on your behalf.

The panel does not usually consider it necessary for **legal representatives** to be present at the review meeting. If you are considering bringing one though, you should make your request at least ***5 school days*** in advance of the meeting date, providing a clear explanation for why you believe one should attend. The panel will consider and respond to your request but has absolute discretion to refuse attendance by legal representatives if it considers this appropriate.

Any **written material will be circulated** to all parties at least ***5 school days*** before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also **not review any new complaints** at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. **Electronic recordings** of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before recording meetings or conversations. Consent or otherwise will be recorded in any notes taken.

The panel determines the **procedure followed at the review meeting**. In doing so it follows current advice and guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) regarding school complaints procedures, including dealing with serial and persistent complaints.

Within ***10 school days*** of the review panel meeting, the Clerk will write to you and the school's Senior Leadership Team explaining the panel's decision.

This is the **final stage in our internal complaints procedure**. If the same issues are raised with the school following the panel review, we will only re-consider these points in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints:

Selly Oak Trust School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, vexatious, offensive or threatening.

Selly Oak Trust School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainants contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on.
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seek to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive, slanderous or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.

- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Selly Oak Trust School.

Complaint Policy Flow Chart — Appendix A

You have a concern. Start by discussing it with a member of staff - Form Tutor, Teacher, Engagement Lead or Head of School for Class Based, Rotation or 6th Form. If your concern is not resolved contact the Headteacher's PA, Lalean Pryce, on the school phone number (0121-472-0876) or by email to lalean.pryce@sellyoak.bham.sch.uk, to arrange a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher or an Assistant Headteacher.

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Stage 1 – Complaint. If your concern is not resolved it is re-classified as a complaint. Please complete the form in Appendix B and return it to the Headteacher in a sealed envelope. The HT will inform the Chair of Governors and give a brief outline of your issues. You will be sent a letter from the Headteacher to confirm receipt of the form within 5 school days.

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Stage 1 Outcome - You will receive a notification of the outcome or an update within 15 school days of us acknowledging receipt of your complaint form.

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Stage 2 – Appeal the outcome of the complaint investigation. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation, you can request a review by making an appeal. See pages 4-9 of this policy and complete the form in Appendix C.

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Stage 2 – Outcome of the Appeal / Review meeting. Within 10 school days of the review panel meeting you will receive a letter explaining the panel's decision. This is the final stage of the school's internal complaints procedure.

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If the same issues are raised with the school following the panel review, your issues will only be re-considered in exceptional circumstances eg if new evidence has come to light.

Appendix B

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher, Selly Oak Trust School.

Your name:
If your child attends the school, please give their name:
Your relationship to the student:
If you are not related to, or caring for, a student at the school then please state your connection to the school eg member of the public, neighbour etc
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
Please give details of your complaint.
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. **(Who did you speak to and what was the response?)**
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Do you have any other comments?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use **Date acknowledgement sent:** **By whom:** **Complaint referred to:** **Date:**

Appendix C

Complaint Review Request Form

If you wish to request a review of the outcome of your complaint, please complete this form and return it to the school.

Your **name**	
Your **address**	
Contact **phone** no. (day/mobile)	
Contact **email** address	
When did you submit your **formal complaint (Appendix A)?**	
Why do you **remain dissatisfied by the outcome** of your complaint? *You may continue on a separate piece of paper or attach additional documents.*	

What **action(s)** do you feel might **resolve your c**omplaint at this stage?

Signed: Date:

Please return this form to: Selly Oak Trust School

Next Steps:

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

Official use	
Date received:	*Signed:*
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Review request referred to:	*Date:*

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by. They will consider whether has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint. The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: Contact the Department for Education - Contact type - GOV.UK, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education,
Piccadilly Gate Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD.